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Why Mumia is a hero to young people

By Tyneisha, Miya and Rhapsody Scintilla
Members of New York and Boston FIST

The following is a commentary from three members of the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) on the eve of the April 19 march and rally in Philadelphia to demand the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal.



There is a man in the state of Pennsylvania who has a street in France named after him. That man is Mumia Abu-Jamal, a journalist and ex-member of the Black Panther Party—an organization classified as “terrorist” by the U.S. government. A former Black Panther, Mumia is now in his 26th year on Pennsylvania’s death row.

Mumia is a hero to Black youth and all people seeking liberation. The “voice of the voiceless,” he chronicles the legacies of people’s struggles worldwide. One of the greatest threats to U.S. imperialism is the uprising of “young Mumias” from the streets of Philadelphia to the streets of Paris.

At the age of 15, Mumia joined the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia, one of the most racist and repressive cities in the country. He became the lieutenant of information for the Philadelphia chapter and later worked with the New York and Oakland chapters. Mumia performed a variety of duties, ranging from selling the Black Panther newspaper to armed security duty.

With his fellow Panthers, Mumia was a leader in the Black Liberation struggle of the late 1960s and earlier 1970s, which was demanding the right of Black people to self-determination, self-defense and, ultimately, complete liberation.

Since his time in the BPP, Mumia has dedicated his life to the education and liberation of Black people in the U.S. and across

CENTERFOLD

► Journalist says Mumia
is innocent

► LGBT activists stand with Mumia

► Texas death row prisoners on Obama



the world. He is a journalist and was integral in calling media attention to the attacks of the Philadelphia Police Department on local Black Panthers and the MOVE organization, including the 1985 bombing of the MOVE compound. In that act of state terrorism, 11 Black people died, including four children.

Is this man not a hero? Is Mumia not a freedom fighter? Why are there no holidays for him and other leaders of the Black Liberation struggle? Did he not dedicate his life to the liberation of the most oppressed?

In history the word “hero” has been used to define a variety of people. The men considered to be the “founding fathers” of the United States are often referred to as heroes, but it is undisputed that these men were active in racist institutions, including slavery.

George Washington owned slaves and at one point had teeth removed from the mouths of slaves in order to have them implanted in his own jaw. Thomas Jefferson raped Sally Hemings, a teenage slave he owned, said to be his wife’s half sister. In 1858 Abraham Lincoln, the man credited with emancipating Black people from slavery, stated the following: “While they [Black people and white people] do remain together there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned

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‘MORTGAGE BANKERS LIE AND CHEAT!’

Sandra Hines of Detroit (center), thrown out of her childhood home a week before Christmas due to foreclosure, speaks outside Policy Conference of Mortgage Bankers Association in Washington, D.C., on April 16. Several hundred people got up to the door of the hotel where the bankers were meeting, then picketed for two hours, chanting “Mortgage bankers lie and cheat, people get thrown out on the street!”

The Ad Hoc National Network to Stop Foreclosures & Evictions brought people, many facing foreclosure, from as far away as Boston, Raleigh and Miami. Sharon Black, a Baltimore organizer who chaired the rally, pointed out that the billionaire bankers were in D.C. to lobby for more tax breaks and concessions from Congress. The network has also organized more than 100,000 messages to representatives demanding a moratorium on foreclosures.



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Speakers at news conference for Dr. Sami Al-Arian, jailed Palestinian on hunger strike.

WW PHOTO: SUE HARRIS

Decry persecution of Muslim professor

A national press conference to demand the immediate release of Dr. Sami Al-Arian was held at the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial, Educational and Cultural Center in Harlem on April 15. Al-Arian was in the 44th day of a hunger strike to demand that the government abide by the terms of his release. He has been imprisoned for more than five years.

Al-Arian, a tenured professor at the University of South Florida, was arrested in 2003. Then-Attorney General John Ashcroft trumpeted it as the “arrest of the most dangerous financier of Islamic Jihad in the Western world.” This case of a Palestinian who raised funds for orphans and charities back home is viewed as one of the most extreme examples of racist and anti-Muslim persecution. The Justice Department has spent \$50 million prosecuting the case. After a six-month trial,

a jury found no evidence that any crime had been committed.

Despite the verdict and in violation of the terms of release and deportation set by the Justice Department, the authorities have continued to refuse to release Al-Arian. Instead, they have demanded that he give testimony against others. This he has courageously refused to do. They are vindictively threatening to keep him in prison for years in a flagrant abuse of the grand jury system.

Now Al-Arian is being held in isolation and transferred from one holding facility to another in a seriously weakened state, without any medical monitoring. His daughter reported that even his family does not know where he is currently being held.

Speakers at the press conference for Al-Arian represented prominent Muslim and civil rights organizations. They included Laila Al-Arian, his

daughter; Malaak Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz; Ramsey Clark and Sara Flounders of the International Action Center; Imam Siraj Wahajimam Talib Abdur-Rashid and Aliya Latif of the Council on American-Islamic Relations; Heidi Boghosian of the National Lawyers Guild; Ghazi Khan Khan of the American Muslim Taskforce on Civil Rights; Mahdi Brey of the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation; and Muhammad Salim Akhtar of the American Muslim Alliance.

Supporters are urged to call, write and/or sign the on-line petition to demand Al-Arian’s release and that the departments of Justice and Immigration adhere to their responsibility for the health and life of prisoners held in their custody. The petition and more information are available at the Web site FreeSamiNow.com. □

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Scary to fly? Here's why

By Caleb T. Maupin

The country was in shock in early April as 3,000 flights were cancelled abruptly. Some 300,000 people found themselves stranded in airports, unable to reach their destinations due to this sudden action by the Federal Aviation Administration. The flights were grounded when “the culture of complacency” that existed between the FAA and the airlines was revealed.

The FAA is assigned the duty of making sure airplanes are safe for those who fly in them. Bobby Boutris, a North Texan, became one of the 46,000 FAA employees hoping to do just that. But he soon learned otherwise. He began to see that the job of FAA inspectors was not to keep the public safe but to do what the airlines wanted.

Boutris finally decided to blow the whistle. He described before Congress how he faced retaliation and punishment by the FAA bureau-

cracy for refusing to let unsafe airplanes reach the sky.

Due in part to his testimony, it was revealed that at least 1,457 recent flights have taken off without fulfilling safety precautions. Over 200,000 innocent passengers risked their lives flying in airplanes with cracked windshields, broken landing gear and damaged wings. (CNN.com, April 1)

In some cases FAA inspectors never even viewed the planes. It was employees of the airlines who actually inspected them. FAA inspectors just looked over their paperwork. (msnbc.com, April 8)

After Boutris’s testimony, his wife received a threatening letter in the mail. It contained an article about widows dealing with grief over the death of their husbands. The package also contained a note telling Mrs. Boutris the information could be “useful” to her soon. (Dallas Morning News, April 5)

More is coming out in the media

about how unsafe the flights that millions of people fly are and how a bureaucracy known as the Federal Aviation Administration didn’t want to hear it.

Airlines, like all enterprises in capitalist society, are not driven by how well they serve the public or human needs. They are driven by how much profit can be pumped into the hands of those who own the business. It became clear that, to the airline industry’s wealthy owners, profits trumped safety by a whole lot.

The government is supposed to counterbalance the pressure of the employers for profits at the expense of safety. But when huge amounts of money are at stake, even “watchdogs” can turn out to be lapdogs of the companies.

The U.S. populace is overwhelmingly grateful for Boutris’s revelations, which he gave at great risk to himself. Perhaps this will educate all of us about the realities of the capitalist profit-driven system. □

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Grassroots effort moves forward to save homes

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

At a press conference here on April 11, Michigan State Sen. Hansen Clarke announced the introduction of a bill for a two-year mortgage foreclosure moratorium into the State Legislature. Modeled on the Michigan Moratorium Act, which was in place during the Great Depression, the law provides for a two-year freeze on foreclosures and evictions.

Clarke, who represents Detroit's East Side district, stated: "The time is now for a moratorium on foreclosures. This is the 40th anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act. The foreclosure crisis is impacting everyone, with homeowners facing the terrible choice of abandoning their property or being evicted, and abandoned homes destroying the value of entire neighborhoods. When you're in foreclosure, time is running out. This is a state of emergency we are in. A two-year moratorium will give borrowers more time to save their homes."

Large yellow signs with the slogan "Moratorium NOW" provided the backdrop for the press conference, which was held at the Michigan Legal Services (MLS) office in downtown Detroit.

Over 60 people packed the room, including activists with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), Michigan Welfare Rights, Call 'Em Out, ACORN, Blight Busters, Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, and

other unions and groups.

In addition to Clarke, speakers at the press conference included Ted Philips of the United Community Housing Coalition—also an MLS attorney assisting people with tax foreclosures—and the Rev. Ed Rowe of Central United Methodist Church. Several homeowners facing foreclosure and eviction also spoke.

MECAWI organizer Jerry Goldberg told the audience how a moratorium was won in the 1930s and "can be won again through mass struggle to force the legislature and governor to act. This law will only be passed because of mass pressure by the people, and we have to organize to make that happen."

In Michigan, foreclosure is done not by the courts but by advertisement. After a homeowner falls behind in mortgage payments, the lender sends her/him a foreclosure notice. Four weeks after that, a "sheriff's sale" takes place. It's a charade in which the lender usually buys the property from itself. After the sheriff's sale, a six-month redemption period occurs in which time the borrower must pay back the entire amount due on the mortgage or lose their home.

The moratorium law will allow the borrower to go to court for an automatic stay to either delay the sheriff's sale for two years or extend the redemption period from six months to two years. The court will set a reasonable repayment plan for the two years based in part on the borrower's income and ability to pay.

The act introduced by Clarke would be in effect for three years. This means that anyone either in foreclosure at the time the law is enacted, or placed in foreclosure during that three-year period, could take advantage of the moratorium. It would give people emergency relief while the struggle continues for a long-term solution to this crisis brought on by the banks.

Throughout the press conference, the important role that MECAWI has played in publicizing and organizing for a moratorium was acknowledged by the speakers.

Goldberg and Vanessa Fluker, both attorneys who help people in foreclosure and eviction cases, were interviewed by a photojournalist from the Toronto Globe & Mail. The Canadian newspaper is beginning a project that will show the human side of the subprime mortgage crisis in the U.S., focusing on Michigan, Florida and California. A MECAWI organizer took the reporter to Detroit neighborhoods ravaged by foreclosures, with abandoned, vandalized homes. Fluker and Goldberg were also interviewed by the CBC television network in Canada.

Media coverage of the moratorium bill included local television, local and statewide radio stations, the Associated Press



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Mich. State Sen. Hansen Clarke (center) with Raymond and Loretta Hintz from Detroit suburb of Roseville, where many workers face foreclosure.

wire service and print media, including the Michigan Citizen.

Near the end of the press conference, the attendees enthusiastically agreed to utilize MECAWI's next moratorium organizing meeting, already scheduled for April 19, as a launching point for a coalition that will mobilize statewide. Rev. Rowe offered space at his church as a base for carrying out this struggle.

MECAWI will be holding public hearings and speak-outs around Michigan in a bold campaign to garner support for the two-year moratorium law. A mass outpouring of the people would force the politicians in Lansing to pass this law and give sorely needed relief to all those affected by the mortgage foreclosure disaster.

The April 19 planning meeting is at 1:00 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church, 4th floor, 23 East Adams at Woodward, in downtown Detroit. For more information and to get involved, contact MECAWI at 313-319-0870, write to moratorium@sbc-global.net or visit www.mecawi.org. □

Block clubs join L.A. campaign for moratorium

By John Parker
Los Angeles

The housing crisis in California sets the record for the nation in the number of foreclosures. There were more than 400,000 in 2007 alone, a 75-percent increase over 2006. The hardest-hit areas in the state include Los Angeles, with its large working-class Latin@ and Black communities, which were targeted by mortgage lenders with subprime loans.

As a result, some have estimated that any economic gains made by Black people in this country in previous decades have been washed away by the foreclosure crisis.

Given this reality it is no surprise that people are organizing a fightback campaign against the banks and the apathy of city and state officials here.

Inspired by the Ad Hoc National Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, which is holding actions in D.C. this week, community leaders and block associations in South Central Los Angeles are organizing on a block-by-block and neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis to push the City Council to adopt a resolution calling for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

Since a meeting with the Harvard Boulevard Block Club in South Los Angeles, participants have been building for a larger meeting at a community center to involve other block clubs, community, church and union leaders, and Neighborhood Delegate Councils. The goal is to get a resolution from the City Council demanding Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declare California to be in a state of emergency, with the intent of declaring a moratorium.

Coordinator Joe Crosby said that organizing for the community's interest

is nothing new to his block association. "We started this block club in 1987 and have had petitions on establishing neighborhood review boards to monitor the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] and we've had speakers from the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Council] and we try to get the information out."

Asked if using the block association to push this resolution has promise, Crosby responded: "It has all the promise because these neighborhood councils and block clubs were voted for about eight years ago to advise the politicians and organize the people. They are partly funded by the gov-

ernment and affect the whole city."

According to the resolution, the devastating effect of the housing crisis on California has not only been on families losing their homes but on the economic health of whole communities hit hardest by these evictions.

The resolution points to the unprecedented increase in poverty due to the housing crisis and the health effects associated with homelessness that constitute a serious risk, especially to children.

"We believe that federal, state and local government have a responsibility to the people of this state and should treat this

'Harlem is not for sale!'

Hundreds lined Harlem's 125th Street on April 13 in a protest against real estate developers and banks that are forcing out the people of this historic Black neighborhood. The protesters formed a human chain, called Hands Across Harlem, from east to west along this major and famous street, the backbone of the community. Led by the Coalition to Save Harlem, Black community and political leaders—including revolutionaries with many decades in the struggle—insisted that Harlem has been and will belong to the people, not to greedy landlords or billionaire mayors. Housing activist Nellie Bailey told WW, "Hands Across Harlem is in the best tradition of our long-standing history of resistance against exploitation and encroachment—including legendary tenant activist Jesse Gray, who organized hundreds of rent strikes in the 1950s and 1960s; Queen Mother Moore, who led a march across Harlem up to the Audubon Ballroom in 1966; the 2000 Anti-Gentrification march across 125th Street organized by the Harlem Tenants Council, and the 2005 anti-



war march that started on 125th Street. In the final analysis the question is, how do we sustain a movement, what is movement building and how do we come together to form a united front despite our differences." A rally followed at the Harlem State Office Building, where Harlem tenants and supporters denounced rezoning plans and gentrification. Even the first Black-owned Harlem store, a record shop right off 125th Street, is threatened. Speakers demanded the means to build and maintain affordable housing in order to preserve this oppressed community's vital culture, history and self-determination.

—Report and photo by Anne Pruden

crisis no differently than any epidemic," said Maggie Vascassenno, a member of the International Action Center, one of the leading organizations pushing for the resolution.

"The California Emergency Act makes it clear that local government has the responsibility of demanding the governor take action with economic assistance and the use of any public or private resources to insure that no one is put at further risk and assistance be guaranteed to those who have already been devastated by this crisis. In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court in the past has upheld the right of states to proclaim moratoriums on foreclosures. So we don't see why officials in this state are not screaming at the top of their lungs to make the governor move," concluded Vascassenno.

"Walking every day," says Crosby, "I see foreclosure signs more and more. For sale signs are all over the neighborhood. So many people feel ashamed, as if it's their fault. There are so many seniors who didn't know about the rising interest rate on their loans and were talked to in such a way that they thought they were getting a normal loan. The people selling it to them didn't care. They just wanted their commission."

"I know people who were paying their rent on time with the option to buy and now they are messed up, too, because the owner lost the house. Then, as soon as you move out, you've got to pay way more money. So this crisis affects everyone. It's happening so often you can hear every hour, especially on the Black radio stations, these moneymaking gimmicks where marketers advertise foreclosed homes."

"It's going to take organizing from the bottom by people losing their home to make anything happen. Otherwise the politicians won't do anything," stated Crosby. □

American Axle strike

Unionists from all over join picket lines

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

“It’s a historical struggle here in Detroit, in a city with all these mass layoffs and people losing their homes. The workers here at American Axle are keeping some energy in our movement and revitalizing the class struggle. So we feel it’s very important to be out here to show them support,” said Dante Strobino, an organizer with United Electrical workers Local 150 and a member of the youth organization Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST).

As Strobino spoke to this Workers World reporter on April 12, the chants from an impromptu rally at UAW Local 235 rang out for blocks.

Led by Black women workers from SEIU United Healthcare Workers West, hundreds chanted before heading back to their vehicles: “Tell the whole damn world, this is union territory! On strike, shut it down, Detroit is a union town!”

Three buses and car caravans from a Labor Notes conference in Dearborn, Mich., had traveled to the site of the world headquarters of American Axle in Hamtramck.

Another group of 50 people from UAW Local 211 also came in solidarity.

Led by strikers, the supporting unionists fanned out in groups to various picket lines where they were greeted with hearty handshakes and cheers.

The internationalist spirit and power of workers from around the world electrified everyone.

“I’m ecstatic. It’s amazing to have members from different locals and different



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

UAW strike is a magnet for workers wanting to resist.

countries—Germany, Brazil, Colorado, Japan and Australia,” Bill Alford Jr., vice president of Local 235, told Workers World at the union hall.

“I had workers from Brazil telling me that they are going to picket American Axle there. It’s just wonderful to see folks up and down the street. They basically came in, took control of the street and let everyone know they were here. They had their own chants and their own songs to support my brothers and sisters on strike.”

Alford said workers from UAW locals at Delphi, Dana Corp., General Motors, Ford and Chrysler in the U.S. and Canada, plus other unions and community organizations, have been walking the picket lines, donating provisions and funds and participating in outreach on a daily basis.

Local 235, which represents over 1,900 Black, white, Arab and Latin@ workers, is now also operating an “adopt-a-worker” program where workers not on strike pledge

a one-time or ongoing monetary contribution for a sister or brother on strike.

Fighting for all workers

Over 3,600 workers at five American Axle plants in Michigan and New York have been on strike for almost two months. Charging an unfair labor practice, the UAW says the company refused to open its books in a serious manner.

American Axle wants to cut the workers’ pay in half, eliminate pensions and gut benefits—despite the fact that the company made \$37 million in profits last year. CEO Richard Dauch himself made \$10.2 million last year, while the workers make on average about \$45,000 to \$50,000 before taxes.

The online Living Wage Calculator estimates that a family of four living in Dearborn, Mich., needs a gross income of \$48,249 to cover basic expenses—and this estimate was for July 2007, before the recent steep rise in energy and food prices.

The company has run ads to recruit scabs and is reportedly training them at various sites in Michigan, New York and elsewhere. It recalled 400 laid-off workers in late March in an attempt to make them lose their unemployment benefits and to encourage them to scab, but they reported for work and then walked right out to the picket line.

A total of 30 GM factories have been fully or partly shut down, with more than 40,000 workers now on layoff. About 80 percent of American Axle’s products are sold to GM. American Axle also produces parts for Toyota, which are being made inside the plant in Detroit by management scabs.

American Axle, the UAW International and the local’s bargaining teams are in ongoing talks. The company has barely moved on its original “proposal” and has thus far rejected outright two contract proposals made by the UAW, saying the concessions offered weren’t enough and that, if the union didn’t agree to American Axle’s demands, it would move its plants. The UAW rejected a mediation request by the company on April 13.

The rank and file continue to fight, refusing to accept any concessionary contract similar to those implemented at Delphi, Dana Corp. and the Big Three. Such agreements would drive the workers into poverty with buy-outs, buy-downs and a two-tier wage structure.

Those on the picket lines are clear that they are fighting for all workers. If American Axle, an extremely profitable company, can get away with massive concessions, that would open the door for an even bigger bosses’ onslaught in the auto industry as well as in other sectors.

In the midst of the American Axle strike, UAW locals at three Michigan factories—in Flint, Lansing and Warren—issued five-day strike notices the week of April 6, telling GM the union will go out if local contracts aren’t agreed to soon.

Revitalizing international class struggle

FIST organizer Strobino added, between chanting at the union hall: “We’re under attack. We’re getting shipped over to Iraq. Our schools are underfunded. A lot of folks can’t even afford to go to college. A lot of them go straight to the work force right out of high school. It’s brought on by the bosses spending trillions of dollars on this imperialist war that could be going to fund people’s needs, give people’s homes back, give money for some good union jobs, for health care, for getting real education. So

ON THE

Catholic teachers to strike during papal visit

Why do Catholic school teachers plan to strike during a papal visit to New York? That’s how mad they are with low pay and inadequate benefits. Catholic teachers earn an average of \$45,000 a year—about 30 percent less than their public-school counterparts. (Associated Press, April 7) The teachers’ contracts expired Aug. 31, 2007. Members of the Lay Faculty Association, which represents 450 teachers in 10 schools, held a one-day sick-out in January and struck eight schools on April 7. The LFA voted to strike from April 15 through 20 and plans to set up an informational picket line in front of St. Joseph’s Seminary in Yonkers, where Pope Benedict XVI is scheduled to visit. Though the Federation of Catholic Teachers, which represents 3,000 teachers in 206 schools, had the same demands as LFA for higher wages, better health care coverage and improved pensions, it signed a contract with the archdiocese on April 11 that did not show real gains. (newsday.com, April 14)

Reality TV workers demand overtime pay

A dozen former workers on major television reality shows like “American Idol” filed a complaint April 9 with the California Division of Labor Standards

the war is very connected to the struggle here, too.”

Quynh Nguyen, a student at the University of Minnesota and a member of Socialist Alternative and Education for Social Change, said, “I think it’s important to support the workers—this strike is crucial,” as she hoisted a UAW placard while walking the picket line.

Todd Ferguson, a chief steward in Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Local 591G in Toronto, Canada, was excited to walk his first UAW picket line in Detroit. “We can’t separate the struggle. It’s the same struggle. It’s the same fight,” said Ferguson.

Benedicto Martínez, one of three national officers of the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Auténtico del Trabajo or FAT), an independent labor federation in Mexico representing labor unions, worker-owned cooperatives, and farm worker and community organizations, joined the picket line in solidarity and to learn about the conditions of workers in the U.S. FAT was a founding member of Mexico’s new, independent labor federation, the National Union of Workers or UNT. Martínez’s comments were translated by Dan LaBotz of the Teamsters.

“Today I am convinced that workers can’t carry out a struggle just in one plant or in one country. These companies have been globalizing, and they’ve been putting their plants all over the world. If there’s a strike, they say we can put this plant in another country. That’s why I believe we have to create unions based on the industries and firms,” said Martínez.

He added: “I wish them victory and hope they’re successful and that they’ll carry on and fight as hard as they can because that’s the only way to defend the benefits and wages that we have. The strike is the ultimate weapon that workers are left with and we have to use it.”

A UAW rally to build support for the striking workers will take place April 18 at Hart Plaza in Detroit. For more information, 313-926-5312 or www.uawaam.org. □

Brazilian auto workers:

‘Don’t take concessions!’

General Motors began demanding concessions from Brazilian auto workers in January. They were overwhelmingly voted down in Sao Jose dos Campos e Regiao by the Sindicato dos Metalurgicos (Metalworkers Union). Martha Grevatt, an autoworker for 20 years, interviewed the union’s general secretary, Luis Carlos “Mancha” Prates, when he was in Detroit April 13 for a labor conference. Prates also visited the picket line of UAW workers on strike at American Axle.

Martha Grevatt: What concessions did General Motors demand of the workers?

Luis Carlos Prates: They wanted new salaries, a new wage scale for new hires, 40 percent lower. The new workers would never reach the salary of older workers. They wanted flexible hours [more than 40 hours a week with no overtime], including night shifts and Saturdays. They wanted temporary work contracts. GM promised 600 new jobs and said they would reopen the second shift, which is currently shut down.

MG: How did the workers respond?

LCP: There were several union meetings and then there was a vote, and the majority rejected the concessions. GM then threatened to take jobs to another plant and to shut our plant.

MG: Have the concessions been imposed?

LCP: No, the company needed the agreement of the union. They are not allowed to impose flexible hours without

the union’s agreement. It would be risky to impose the new wage scale without the union’s agreement.

MG: Where is the struggle at now?

LCP: Now, the company is trying to impose the concessions. They say without the reduction in pay and making the workday flexible, they will not produce new products. So we are organizing a resistance. We are denouncing this within Brazil and outside Brazil to unite everyone to support this struggle. We have leaflets and stickers for publicity in the community, so that all metalworkers know what’s happening. We have a media campaign, so people will support us in the event of a bigger struggle.

MG: How can U.S. workers help?

LCP: First, workers in the U.S. should fight for their own rights here, like at American Axle. Don’t take concessions. Second, we have to unite. We should not compete among us. We should not ask to take each other’s jobs.

MG: How are you planning support in Brazil for the American Axle strike?

LCP: One, we are going to do publicity about the strike, as an example of resistance to the transnationals, as an example of the globalization of workers’ struggles. Two, we will talk to the workers of American Axle’s Brazilian subsidiary to see how they can support the struggle.

Brother Prates asked workers from all over the world to support the metal workers’ fight. You can message them at mancha@sindmetalsjc.org.br.

To reach Martha Grevatt, e-mail mgrevatt@workers.org.

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Enforcement seeking \$500,000 in unpaid overtime and penalties. They called for an end to “sweatshop conditions.” The Writers Guild has tried since 2005 to organize these workers; two class-action lawsuits were filed that year accusing several major networks and production companies of violating labor laws governing overtime wages and meal breaks. The suits, still pending, also accused producers of coercing workers to falsify time cards. One worker said he routinely put in 12 to 20 hours a day, seven days a week, over three years on “American Idol.” When he asked for overtime or a raise, he was threatened with dismissal. (Reuters, April 10)

Starbucks ordered to pay \$106 million

A San Diego Superior Court judge ruled March 20 that Starbucks has to pay nearly \$106 million in restitution to an estimated 120,000 current and former baristas in California because the coffee company illegally forced workers to share tips with supervisors over the past eight years. (San Diego Union-Tribune, March 21) The judge also issued an injunction ordering the company to halt that practice at its 2,000 stores in the state. This ruling could have ramifications for the entire restaurant industry in California. It already has in New York City. Barista Jeana Barenbolm filed a suit in federal court April 3 asserting that Starbucks violated a state law barring employers from receiving part of workers’ tips. Her lawyer is asking the court to make it a class action suit, affecting all baristas in the state. (New York Times, April 4)

D.C. rallies behind grocery workers

Flyers are being handed out in front of Safeway and Giant grocery stores in the Washington, D.C., area asking community members to support the workers who are fighting for living wages, decent health care coverage and better pensions. The DC Jobs with Justice flyer notes: “Good jobs and good benefits build strong communities.” Such community outreach campaigns have been shown to help grocery workers win good contracts in other parts of the country.

Arizona: coverage for same-sex partners

Same-sex partners and dependents of state employees and retirees will soon receive taxpayer-subsidized health coverage in Arizona. A government panel, empowered to change state rules, voted 4 to 0 in early April to extend coverage. (New York Times, April 2)

Workers’ Memorial Day, April 28

Organized labor will focus attention on workplace safety and honor thousands of workers killed annually and countless others injured and sickened on the job on Workers’ Memorial Day, April 28. This year’s theme is Good Jobs-Safe Jobs for All. The AFL-CIO also issued its annual study, “Death on the Job,” which reports by industry why deaths and injuries occurred and exposes the federal government’s shameful track record. The lack of enforcement of existing safety laws by Bush’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration will also be highlighted. For more information, see www.afl-cio.org. □

FIST leader at AA picket line

‘Fighting a common enemy’

Larry Hales of the youth organization Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) and Workers World Party visited Detroit April 3-6. Within hours of arriving in the city, Hales grabbed a picket sign and joined the striking workers at American Axle. WW Contributing Editor Bryan G. Pfeifer interviewed Hales about his experience and analysis of the strike.

WW: You started your visit to Detroit on the picket line at American Axle. Why did you go?

LH: When I was growing up my family worked in the factories of Erie, Pa. My father has had 39 years at General Electric. My mother worked making ceramic tiles and other ceramic items. My brother worked making plastic items.

Erie is very similar to Detroit in a lot of ways, except it’s a lot smaller. I grew up being very familiar with the struggle of industrial workers against those who own and run the factories.

American Axle being one of the major battles happening—not just in Detroit, but around the country—I wanted the opportunity to talk to the workers and meet them. I went to see about issues like the foreclosures, deindustrialization and police brutality as well.

WW: What were your experiences on the picket line?

LH: One of the clear things is that U.S. society is constantly trying to dumb people down. Public education is run by the oppressor. When you have a country like



Larry Hales

WW PHOTO

the U.S.—that has built its wealth off the backs of not only the “third world” nations abroad, but the internal nations, the oppressed nations within the U.S.—then an education from the oppressor is going to be an education from the ruling class, which is primarily white and has gotten its gains off the backs of darker people, using racism as a weapon.

The popular media try to make it seem as if the culture of the oppressed and of the workers is superficial, but it’s not. People are paying attention. It matters what the educational system is, but it doesn’t matter as far as people’s understanding of who their oppressor is.

On the picket line I could see that people are very much aware of what’s happening and are very articulate in expressing their opposition to it. The superficial news programming and television programming are not having the effect the bosses want. People may partake, but it doesn’t affect

their overall thinking of how they relate to those trying to take away their jobs.

I was able to get into very heavy conversations on the picket line with people that when there’s a struggle, they’ll be right there, with a very deep understanding of who their enemy is. They’ll ultimately be the ones who will push the struggle forward.

WW: We visited the Local 235 union hall and the picket line. You noted the many Black workers participating in the strike, in particular the Black women playing leading roles in the community support committee and elsewhere.

LH: The great thing about Detroit is that you can drive for miles and miles and not see anybody but Black people. There are lots of cities in the South that are that way, but being a northern city I think Detroit’s very unique. It has been this way for a long time and still to this day Black people, Black workers, make up the largest progressive force in this country.

Seeing the workers engaged in the struggle at American Axle, at the union hall and on the picket line, just proves that fact. Whatever Black middle class exists, the beginnings of it were industrial labor. So when the industrial base began to be eroded and taken away, these were the workers hit the hardest. But the fight of Black people—which is historical, facing the conditions of U.S. society—is still there. When you see a worker on the picket line, of course you see someone fighting against their oppression. When you

see a Black worker, you see somebody fighting against numerous oppressions at the same time. So it’s very important to see especially the white workers and the Latin@ workers, all together, fighting against a common enemy: the bosses.

WW: Why is FIST supporting the American Axle strike?

LH: I’m 31 and a lot of these issues affect my generation profoundly. When people talk about the foreclosure crisis, the next bubble to burst is going to be student loans. You have people who are taking 30, 50, some as much as \$100,000 out in loans just to go to school and there aren’t any jobs to pay that back. There are less and less jobs and they pay lower wages. And the state and federal governments are already backing off on guaranteeing loans. So we have to begin to orient ourselves to youth. What’s it going to be like even 10 years from now for people who have to go out into the workforce and pay their loans back?

As at any particular time in history—it’s a cliché—but youth are the future, the future of the struggle to free ourselves from this anarchic, brutal system from which massive layoffs and home foreclosures come. □

STOP THE RAIDS & DEPORTATIONS

Legalization Now • Justice for ALL



MASS RALLY for IMMIGRANT & WORKER RIGHTS

THURSDAY ► MAY 1st

► **12 p.m. Gather at Union Square**
14th Street and Broadway

► **4 p.m. Rally & March**

May Day 2008 is critically important. Will the optimism and hope expressed around the Presidential elections translate into an end of immigrant raids & deportations? Will it bring an end to the foreclosures of homes, the lowering of gas and food prices, or an end to lay-offs?

Whatever the outcome in November, the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights will be marching once again on May Day, International Workers Day, to say no to all the attacks against workers here and around the world.

We call on the progressive community, the anti-war movement, the women’s & LGBT movement, and especially on the labor movement, to come out for May Day 2008. March for solidarity, because an injury to one is an injury to all!

Rally called by
May 1st Coalition for Immigrant & Worker Rights
www.may1.info 641.715.3900 Ext. 97869#

WE SAY ▼

- ◆ **Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, Arab, White-In Unity there is strength.**
- ◆ **ICE raids are racist, anti-union, and violate immigrant & U.S. workers’ civil rights & divide families.**
- ◆ **Jobs & homes, not lay-offs & foreclosures. Stop demolition of public housing in New Orleans & everywhere.**
- ◆ **No war in Iraq, bring the troops home now.**
- ◆ **Political asylum for Victor Toro; No deportation of Flor Crisóstomo.**
- ◆ **Money for levees in New Orleans, not for militarizing the U.S./Mexico border.**
- ◆ **Repeal NAFTA. U.S. trade agreements force migration & lay-offs.**

An interview with author J. Patrick O’Connor

The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Hans Bennett

Following are excerpts from an April 11 interview conducted by Hans Bennett, a Philadelphia journalist and co-founder of Journalists for Mumia. Go to www.Abu-Jamal-News.com to read the interview in its entirety.

On March 27, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against granting a new guilt-phase trial to world-famous journalist and death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. While ruling against the three issues that could have led to a new guilt-phase trial, the court affirmed U.S. District Court Judge Yohn’s 2001 decision overturning the death sentence. If the district attorney wants to reinstate the death sentence, the D.A. must call for a new penalty-phase jury trial that would be limited to the question of life in prison without a chance of parole or a reinstatement of the death sentence.

At this critical juncture in Abu-Jamal’s case, an explosive new book is set for release in May, titled “The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal,” by J. Patrick O’Connor, and published by Lawrence Hill Books. O’Connor explains that he was “an associate editor for TV Guide at its headquarters in nearby Radnor, Pa., during the time Officer Faulkner was killed and Abu-Jamal was put on trial and convicted of murdering him.... Sometime in the mid-1990s I began hearing and seeing the ‘Free Mumia’ slogan.

“In 1996, when HBO premiered the one-hour documentary ‘Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?,’ I developed

some questions about the verdict and certainly the fairness of his trial.”

Soon, O’Connor had “read all the trial transcripts as well as all of the transcripts from Abu-Jamal’s Post-Conviction Relief Act hearings that were held in 1995, and continued in 1996 and 1997. I also read all the contemporaneous newspaper articles from the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, as well as all the books published about the case.”

HB: In your book, you were very optimistic about the Third Circuit granting Abu-Jamal a new guilt-phase trial. Were you surprised by the March 27 ruling? If so, how do you account for such a surprising ruling?

JPOC: I was incredulous. I thought the oral arguments on May 17 had gone extremely well for Abu-Jamal and that he would get a new trial. The 2-1 majority ruling demonstrated anew just how politicized this case always has been from the beginning and continues to be still. The two Republican-appointed judges on the panel formed the majority and the lone Democrat-appointed judge dissented. I hate to make it sound that simple, but the U.S. Supreme Court itself is not above making decisions based on party or ideological lines, and all too frequently does.

In its ruling, the majority stated it believed Abu-Jamal had “forfeited his Batson claim by failing to make a timely objection. But even assuming Abu-Jamal’s failure to object is not fatal to his claim, Abu-Jamal has failed to meet his burden in providing a prima facie case.” The majority stated that he failed because his

attorneys at his PCRA evidentiary hearing neglected to elicit the prosecutor’s reasons for removing 10 otherwise qualified blacks by means of peremptory strikes during jury selection.

In a nutshell, the majority denied Abu-Jamal’s Batson claim on a technicality of its own invention, not on its merits.

Judge Ambro’s dissent was sharp: “...I do not agree with them [the majority] that Mumia Abu-Jamal fails to meet the low bar for making a prima facie case under Batson. In holding otherwise, they raise the standard necessary to make out a prima facie case beyond what Batson calls for.”

In other words, the majority, in this case alone, has upped the ante required for making a Batson claim beyond what the United States Supreme Court stipulated. When ruling in Batson in 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court imposed no timeliness restrictions as to when a Batson claim may be raised, nor has the court done so in the intervening 22 years. Neither did it require that the racial composition of the entire jury pool be known before a Batson claim could be raised. [In fact, the Supreme Court recently added heft to its Batson ruling, ruling in Synder that the purging of only one black juror on the basis of racial discrimination was grounds for a new trial.]

In addition, the Supreme Court ruled in 1986 that to establish a prima facie case for a Batson claim, the defendant must show only “an inference” of prosecutorial discrimination in purging even one black from a jury. Even the Third Circuit

has never previously allowed the timing of a Batson claim to be material, nor had it ever ruled previously that not knowing the racial composition of the entire jury pool was a fatal flaw in lodging a Batson claim.

The fact that the prosecutor in Abu-Jamal’s case used 10 of the 15 peremptory challenges to exclude blacks from the jury—a strike rate of 66 percent against potential black jurors—is in itself an inference of discrimination. The result was that only three of the 12 jurors impaneled were black.

The Third Circuit should have remanded the case back to Federal District Court Judge Yohn—the judge who ruled on Abu-Jamal’s habeas corpus petition in 2001—to hold an evidentiary hearing to determine the prosecutors’ reasons for excluding the 10 potential black jurors he struck. If that hearing revealed racial discrimination on the part of the prosecutor during jury selection, Judge Yohn would be compelled to order a new trial for Abu-Jamal.

HB: With the media spotlight on the Pennsylvania primary elections, and the major demonstrations supporting Abu-Jamal on April 19, what would you like the world to know about this famous death-row case? How far has the city of Philadelphia come since the days of Police Commissioner and Mayor Frank Rizzo, a notorious racist and public advocate of police brutality?

JPOC: In a real sense, D.A. Lynn Abraham, just as Frank Rizzo before her, embodies the worst of Philadelphia. The day Federal District Court Judge Yohn overturned Abu-Jamal’s death sentence in 2001, Abraham put her antipathy for Abu-Jamal this way: “Today, Mumia Abu-Jamal is what he has always been: a convicted, remorseless, cold-blooded killer.”

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal represents an enormous miscarriage of justice, representing an extreme example of prosecutorial abuse and judicial bias. What makes getting to the truth about this case so difficult for people, particularly people in Philadelphia, is that the prosecution built its case on perjured testimony with a calculated disregard for what the actual evidence established. The local media bought into the prosecution’s story line early on and has never been able to see this case for what it is: a framing of an innocent and peace-loving man.

Despite more than 25 years of the bleakest existence possible in isolation on death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal remains what he has always been: an articulate, compassionate righter of wrongs. □

LGBT activists stand with Mumia

Rainbow Flags for Mumia is a coalition of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and organizations that came together in 1999 to demand a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal. The following are excerpts from a call issued by RF4M organizers Imani Henry and LeiLani Dowell to help raise awareness and solidarity with the Free Mumia rally in Philadelphia on April 19. To endorse this call, e-mail RF4Mumia@gmail.com.

In 2008, we as LGBT peoples are outraged that we continue to face racist, anti-LGBT violence in the streets, in our homes, at the hands of police and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). In 2008, it is a crime that there is still not a cure for AIDS, while we face devastating cuts in services, health care and research.

It is an injustice that the economic rights afforded heterosexual couples are still denied us and our families. And just like the majority of workers in the U.S., we are incensed by the deepening economic crisis—with increasing rates of unemployment, the lack of affordable housing and an exponential increase in foreclosures and evictions, while the Bush administration continues to spend billions on the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moreover, even our most human right to defend ourselves from anti-gay violence is denied, sending more of us to jail, like the Jersey 4, young African-American lesbians who were sentenced up to 11 years in prison. We see the Jersey 4 as a politically motivated case, centered on the racist gentrification of the birthplace of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, the West Village of New York City.

Despite the racist, anti-LGBT oppression we face, it is because of our movement’s rich history of resistance, from the Stonewall Inn to the Compton Cafeteria in California, that we continue to fight for equality and social justice today. It is with that same righteous rage against injustice that we as LGBT peoples demand the immediate freedom of the Jersey 4 and continue to fight for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On March 27, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals denied a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Although there is overwhelming evidence proving Mumia’s innocence, this ruling has left Mumia’s only legal options as life in prison without parole or execution by the state of Pennsylvania.

But just like the case of South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, who was sentenced to life in prison, we believe we can and will continue to build an international movement to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was a founding member of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party as a teenager. Years later he began reporting professionally on radio stations, such as NPR. Known as “the Voice of the Voiceless,” Mumia won awards for his reporting on police brutality and other social and racial epidemics that plagued communities of color in Philadelphia and throughout the world. In 1981 he was arrested and sent to death row for allegedly shooting Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. We know that Mumia remains in jail because he is a political leader.

Through his writings, behind the walls of death row, Mumia has shown solidarity with oppressed peoples all over the

world. In a 1999 statement denouncing recent anti-gay murders, including the killing of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyo.; Billy Jack Gaither in Sylacauga, Ala.; and Henry Edward Northington in Richmond, Va., Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote: “Is it a coincidence that Richmond, the city where a Black man was burned to death and decapitated, follows several months later with the decapitation and torture of a gay man? I think not.”

Rainbow Flags for Mumia calls on all LGBT organizations and activists to endorse and mobilize for April 19 and beyond. With legal options exhausted, it is up to us, by any means necessary, to ensure that Mumia no longer languishes in jail under the threat of execution. □

Why Mumia is a hero to young people

Continued from page 1

to the white race.”

These three men, along with many other wealthy white men in U.S. history, have been labeled heroes. Youth and students across the country are taught daily that they are the type of people we should celebrate. Their histories of racism, sexism, capitalism and heterosexism are covered up and the mass murder and displacement they are responsible for is called the establishment of the United States.

But those are the oppressor’s heroes. Who are ours? Who are the heroes of people of color, women, lesbian/bi/gay/trans/queer folks and the working masses? One of them is definitely Mumia Abu-Jamal.

In 1981 Mumia was framed for the murder of Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to

execution. The U.S. government, the Fraternal Order of Police and the racist mainstream media have waged a campaign against Mumia for 27 years, portraying him as terrorist and a murderer. But the people’s struggle has kept him alive.

The negative portrayal of Mumia and the Black Liberation movement as a whole is an aspect of the overall war against Black people, specifically Black youth. Like the omission from the history books of the 1935 Wiley College debate team, recently portrayed in the film “The Great Debaters,” the criminalization of Mumia is a deliberate attempt to erase the contributions of Blacks in the United States.

Combined with disproportionate military recruitment and incarceration, as well as the blatant murders of Black youth by the state, the eradication of Black Liberation

Barack Obama:

Substantive hope or pipe dream?

By Harvey Earvin and Howard Guidry

Running on a message of change, presidential candidate Barack Obama has inspired hope never before witnessed in this century or perhaps even the preceding one. New voters, mostly young, filled with new hope and a renewed belief that America could one day live up to her creed, are flocking to the polls in support of him.

Hope. Unity. Change. Obama certainly has the right message. Perhaps he's even the right man. But is the Democratic Party the right party? And is the capitalist system the right system?

Every step of the way in this contentious campaign the Clintons and key party members loyal to them have sought to marginalize Obama and reduce him to just another Black man by repeatedly injecting race into the campaign.

Without question, the Democratic Party, Barack Obama's party, is infused with racism, blatant and glaring. Yet it dims when juxtaposed against the incendiary racism of the capitalist media, as we saw with the gross caricaturing of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

Obama, to be sure, is no revolutionary; far from it. But he knows well the politics of capitalism, an economic system deeply rooted in the ruthless philosophy of "grab what you can get and keep what you can hold." Competition and divisiveness are as intrinsic to capitalism as stink in a cow pie. Yet Obama's message is a contradictory message to his party: a message of change and unity.

For us to have unity in the United

States, we must have change. Not reformative, but absolute!

The Republican Party was formed in 1854. The Democratic Party was organized in 1792. What we must all come to accept, once and for all, is that they will never represent our interests. They were not created to. John Adams, one of the founding fathers of this country, said that he was against universal suffrage only because the poor would vote to take the fortunes away from the rich and establish equality. We know, too, that the U.S. Constitution was written to limit democracy, to exclude the poor, women and people of color. The inequality and injustice that disfigure and define this country result from deliberate design, not some unfortunate accident of history.

After 200 years, the great masses of the people find themselves far from that Promised Land, in a valley of hopelessness and despair; the same hopelessness and despair that led to the uprising in 1786 known as Shay's Rebellion. This popular rebellion involved thousands of impoverished farmers who were sick and tired of losing their land and their cattle to creditors. This forced them to unite and rebel.

Farmers in 2008 are facing the same problems, with Black farmers losing their land at a disproportionate rate. Homes are being foreclosed on and across the board, workers are taking a beating. They're tak-



Howard Guidry



Harvey Earvin

ing a beating at the gas pumps while oil companies are raking in record profits. They're taking a beating at the supermarkets with inflation in a time of recession, when times are hardest. They're taking a beating every time the government, Democrats and Republicans, bail out faltering corporations but do nothing for the average worker facing a financial crisis.

What then has been the government's response when the common folk have come together as one, be it in the form of unions, mass protest, or party organizing, to just say "No, not this time!"

To the farmers of Shay's Rebellion, the government responded with the militia. Some were shot and killed. Hundreds were arrested and the government quickly passed a so-called Riot Act Law that suspended Habeas Corpus so that the farmers couldn't get out of jail. While most were given prison sentences or assessed fines, the leaders of the rebellion were sentenced to death and hanged.

It was this hopelessness and despair that led to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement with demonstrations in every major city in this country. How did the government respond? In Birmingham, Ala., in 1963, Commissioner of Public Safety "Bull" Connor sent out cops in riot gear, armed with nightsticks, scatter guns, dogs and high-powered water hoses to attack peaceful demonstrators, many of whom were young school children.

It was this same kind of hopelessness and despair that led to the 1992 Los Angeles uprising after a jury acquitted four cops accused in the videotaped brutal beating of Black motorist Rodney King. How did the government respond? With the police, the National Guard, the Army and the Marines! Between 50 and 60 people were killed and 2,000 were injured. Thousands of jobless youth were arrested and jailed. The president allocated over \$600 million for rebuilding South Central L.A. but only \$18 million was earmarked for food, jobs, job skills and housing. More was spent on beefing up the police force and creating more jails and prison spaces.

History talks to us

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, imprisoning 10

MUMIA SPEAKS

An interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Columns by the Black journalist on prisons, capitalism, politics, revolution and solidarity. Additional essays on the prison-industrial complex by Monica Moorehead, Larry Holmes and Teresa Gutierrez. International Action Center 55 West 17th St., 5 Fl, New York, NY 10011 \$3 includes shipping & handling

times more people per capita than Japan or any nation of Western Europe. As of February 2008, there were 3,263 people on death rows across the country. Most of them are Black and Brown. There are over 3.3 million locked up in jails and prisons, with African-American men in their twenties who are locked up exceeding the number of African-American men of any age who are attending colleges and universities.

Obama again hits home with the truth by saying, "Politicians routinely exploit fear of crime for their own electoral ends. Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism."

In truth, most prisoners are products of inequality, social injustice, racial injustice, subpar education and a shortage of legitimate economic opportunities. By far, most crimes are driven by economic necessity. A large number are fueled by mental illnesses that result from living under this capitalist system.

Recognizing this calls for different remedies. True solutions run counter to the sprawling prison-industrial complex that we have today as well as the systemic execution of those living at the margins of society.

To say that Obama is here to the rescue is pure fantasy. But, as a Black man, he is more knowledgeable of and sensitive to the pain and suffering of the poor. I cannot imagine him, for the sake of winning the presidency, running a Willie Horton campaign ad of a Black man getting out of prison to prey on society, as did the late Ronald Reagan in 1981; or an ad depicting prison as nothing but a revolving door where one day you're in and the next day you're out, as did George Bush Sr. in 1989; or abandoning the campaign trail to return to his home state on the day of an execution to demonstrate his support for state-sanctioned killing, as did Bill Clinton in 1993.

I cannot imagine Obama not responding to the victims of Katrina and using the excuse of not knowing, as did the current president. Or him going along with the mainstream media in portraying the Black Katrina survivors who scavenged the stores for food and water as criminals and hoodlums and the whites as just desperate families trying to survive.

Whether Obama wins or not, he has already defied the odds. He has come this far not because he is Black, as former Democratic vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro would have us believe. But his message of hope, change and unity resonates with the people. His is a revolutionary message. But it will require work.

Earvin and Guidry are long-time leaders of PURE—Panthers United for Revolutionary Education—and are political prisoners on Texas death row. Go to www.workers.org to read this article in its entirety.

Mumia Abu-Jamal on: 'Of power & empire'



You can read Mumia Abu-Jamal's March 22 column on Barack Obama's candidacy at www.workers.org and hear this column and others by Mumia at www.prisonradio.org.



WW PHOTO: LAL ROOHH

Rally at 3rd Circuit Court hearing in Philadelphia, May 17, 2007

people

history is a strategic tool in the oppression of Black people. Cases like the Jena 6, the Jersey 4, the state murders of Sean Bell and Amadou Diallo, as well as the case of John White, are all a part of the attack on Black people and our basic human right to self-defense. One must ask: Why is it that when people of color are forced to defend ourselves, it is considered by the state to be an unheroic, criminal act?

The Black Panther Party of the 1960s and 1970s and Mumia Abu-Jamal are our heroes and revolutionaries. They are the leaders of our national liberation. We as youth, especially Black youth, see the BPP as proof of Black agency in history, in opposition to the education we receive that portrays Black people as a historically passive people.

Though many of us can name Mumia as our hero, there are far too many of us who have no idea who he is and what he has contributed to human history. It is a product of the state's attempted eradication of all liberation movements fighting against U.S. imperialism, specifically those led by people of color.

In the words of Mumia: "I'm fighting every day, not just for my freedom, not just for my liberation, but for all of our liberation. Unabashedly I'll fight for revolution because I think revolution is our only solution. I'm not shy about using that word."

Mumia: father, grandfather, journalist, freedom fighter, visionary, revolutionary. Mumia is not just a hero but a flame-sparker and we are the Inheritors of the Fire. □

Anti-China protests

MADE IN USA, NOT TIBET

By Gary Wilson

Most noteworthy about the protests in London, Paris and San Francisco that targeted the Olympic Torch on its way to the Beijing Olympics was their character.

Take the events in San Francisco on April 9. The biggest numbers to turn out were not protesters. They were from the Chinese community—thousands according to an NPR report—and came to show their support for China. There may have been nearly as many police—more than 3,000 according to city officials.

The anti-China protests were small in numbers. The Guardian (British) reported about 300 in San Francisco; other wire reports said simply hundreds.

The small numbers might be a surprise if you'd followed the big news coverage leading up to the event. No protest in recent memory has received such major media coverage in the week or two before it happened. Such media coverage gives the impression that a big event is to take place.

The small numbers of anti-China protesters might be attributed to the fact that the protesters claimed to be representing

the interests of the people of Tibet, but they were not themselves Tibetan. There were at most a handful of Tibetans.

Actually, there are few Tibetans outside Tibet. The exile community is small—estimates put it at 100,000 to 200,000 at most—and almost all are in Nepal or India. So it is not Tibetans who are in London, Paris or San Francisco, but non-Tibetans—mainly North Americans or Western Europeans—who are protesting against China, claiming that they speak for the Tibetans.

When size doesn't matter

Maybe it wasn't the size of the event that mattered to the big-business-controlled media in the U.S., but rather the message.

FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting) has documented the censorship that dominates the U.S. media. It is a censorship imposed not by the government but by the owners of the media. The political message of an event determines whether it is covered in the news media or censored out.

Most glaring has been the lack of coverage of anti-war protests in all the U.S.

media, from newspapers to television and radio.

Several FAIR reports showed the systematic way that the media have ignored or distorted all protests against the Iraq war, for example. Demonstrations that drew hundreds of thousands not only got no attention in the days or weeks leading up to them, but sometimes were never covered at all or were only barely mentioned.

The April 2003 FAIR magazine reported: "In its news coverage in the period before the invasion [of Iraq] began on March 19, the New York Times played down opposition to war and exaggerated support for George W. Bush's Iraq policy—in ways that ranged from questionable to dishonest. ...

"After the invasion began, when more than 100,000 people in New York City demonstrated on March 22, it was front-page news the next day in the Washington Post and the Boston Globe. But the New York Times, whose offices are two blocks away from where the anti-war march started, placed the story on page B11," FAIR concluded.

The contrast with the coverage of the anti-China protests today shows the political agenda being pursued by the U.S. media. It has nothing to do with the size of the protests.

Washington's hidden role

The anti-China protests were planned in Washington, London and Paris, not in Tibet or the Tibetan exile communities.

In fact, Washington's heavy role in the protests, using Tibet and Tibetans as a cover for an anti-China agenda, has spurred public criticism from no less than the former leader of the Free Tibet Campaign.

Patrick French, once the director of that group in London, wrote an opinion piece that the New York Times published on March 22. He said the exile community led by the Dalai Lama in India is making outlandish demands and claims.

For example, part of what he calls the Dalai Lama's "Hollywood strategy" is to lay claim to a so-called Greater Tibet, demanding territory never considered part of Tibet.

Another example French gives is the claim made by the "Free Tibet" groups in London and Washington that 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed by the Chinese since the Dalai Lama regime was overturned in 1959. His own exhaustive research, he says, has turned up no evidence to back this claim.

Such distortions and misinformation are put forward not by Tibetans in Tibet, French says. They are put forward by those with a hidden agenda who are behind the "Free Tibet" campaign.

"The International Campaign for Tibet, based in Washington, is now a more powerful and effective force on global opinion than the Dalai Lama's outfit in northern India. The European and American pro-Tibet organizations are the tail that wags the dog of the Tibetan government-in-exile," French wrote. □

Torture: the 'rot' began at the top

By Dianne Mathiowetz

The Bush administration has been caught in another lie.

Remember how the president looked earnestly into the television cameras on Oct. 6, 2007, and said, "This government does not torture people."

While the issue of illegal and inhumane practices towards prisoners erupted into public consciousness following the release of gruesome photos from Abu Ghraib in April 2004, secret memos dating from much earlier reveal that detailed and elaborate discussions on the use of torture were held in the White House by top government officials

Rather than just "a few bad apples," as those lower military members who were prosecuted for their crimes at Abu Ghraib were labeled, these documents prove the "rot" began at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

Discussions about how to get around U.S. and international law were held almost immediately after 9/11 by Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, CIA Director George Tenet, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Attorney General John Ashcroft, among others.

While there are variances in the words defining torture in the Geneva Conventions, the U.N. Charter and other U.N. conventions and declarations, as well as U.S. military and domestic codes, the indisputable meaning prohibits the use of severe pain, suffering or degradation, whether mental or physical, to be intentionally inflicted on any person for the purpose of gaining information or a confession.

Such policies are considered "war crimes" in international law, with prosecution not limited to the actual practitioners of torture but applicable to those who promulgated and issued the orders.

Since 9/11, there has been a sustained effort by elements of the Bush administration, particularly Cheney, to assert that the president has unlimited power to order brutal interrogations of detainees in order to extract information deemed

necessary to protect the U.S.

When confronted by allegations of torture by U.S. military or CIA and FBI agents abroad, the White House initially asserted that these acts were "aberrations." Later they said the request for expanded interrogation techniques came from "the field."

Documents attained by the ACLU in its ongoing legal battle over the hundreds of prisoners held at Guantánamo Bay prove that the use of waterboarding, prolonged stress positions, 20-hour interrogation sessions, extreme isolation, hooding, nudity, sleep deprivation, temperature extremes and other brutal measures was approved at the highest level of government, including George W. Bush. Instructions giving legal cover for torture were sent to the CIA and Defense Department beginning in 2002.

Ashcroft, at one of these "torture" discussions, voiced this concern: "Why are we talking about this in the White House? History will not judge this kindly."

However, recent revelations of official approval by the Bush administration of torture are only part of the picture. The jails and prisons of the U.S., police departments, immigration agents, mental hospitals, juvenile "boot camps" and other repressive institutions employ similar inhumane, often racist, sexist and homophobic tactics to force confessions, maintain control or alter behavior.

Countless lawsuits over prison conditions detail how Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo-style torture is practiced throughout the U.S., from the decades-long solitary confinement of the members of the Angola 3 to the torture-induced "confessions" behind the indictment of the San Francisco 8.

Over 2 million people are incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails, mostly men and women of color, almost all poor, often convicted of crimes of survival without having adequate legal representation.

The connections between "the war abroad" and "the war at home" reveal themselves clearly through prison bars and isolation cells. □

Body of War

STORY OF CONSTANT PAIN

By Michael Kramer

On April 9 the documentary "Body of War" opened at the IFC Center in New York to a packed house. It will be opening later in April in San Francisco, Berkeley, Seattle and Los Angeles. Previous openings have taken place in Washington, D.C., Boston and Kansas City. It is co-directed by Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro and is well worth seeing.

The film tells the story of a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Tomas Young, who enlisted on Sept. 13, 2001. He deployed to Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division in March 2004 and in less than a week was paralyzed from the chest down after being shot in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad.

His story is one of constant pain. His body no longer has an internal thermostat. He takes 35 pills a day for both physical and psychological wounds. After being wounded he spends only six weeks in Walter Reed Army Medical Center and then is sent home wheelchair-bound to St. Louis.

The film intimately follows his day-to-day life. Young gets married. On his honeymoon he goes to Camp Casey and meets with Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Baghdad on the same day Young was wounded.

The working-class couple tries their best to make it a go. His wife works full time as a server in a comedy club and as a primary caregiver at home. The stresses are too

much and they break up. Cathy Smith, his mother, becomes his primary caregiver.

The film also follows IVAW member Young's anti-war activities at demonstrations as well as interacting with veterans, active-duty soldiers, the Veterans Administration and members of Congress.

The film does have its drawbacks. Had it been just about Tomas Young, it would have a much stronger message. Instead, the message is diluted by the filmmakers' portrayal of the Democratic Party over and over as an anti-war political party. This is not surprising considering the connections Phil Donahue has to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

The 133 members of Congress—mostly Democrats—who voted against the Oct. 10, 2002, War Resolution are presented as national heroes and icons. There is no mention of the fact that most of them have continued to vote for funding the war every year since it began—even when the Democrats took control of Congress after the November 2006 elections.

Issued at the same time as the documentary is an outstanding 2-CD collection of songs chosen by Tomas Young as inspiring the growth of his political consciousness. The contributing artists include Michael Franti & Spearhead, Rage Against the Machine, Public Enemy, Bruce Springsteen and Pearl Jam. It is being sold as an IVAW fundraiser. □

Tibet and the CIA's anti-China Crusade

Has Tibet become the front line of a new national liberation struggle? Or is something else happening there?

This collection of articles from Workers World newspaper should be read by everyone who wants to look beyond the anti-China hype about Tibet and understand what's really going on.

Order this booklet and many other timely books online at www.leftbooks.com



Hungry Haitians try to storm Palace

By G. Dunkel

A large crowd of protesters marched on Haiti's Presidential Palace April 8 waving green branches and shouting, "We're hungry! Feed us!" They pushed large metal trash bins to scale the walls.

Guards managed to keep them from storming the palace until Minustah, the U.N. occupying army, arrived in armored personnel carriers and drove the protesters back from the walls with tear gas, rubber bullets and shots fired into the air.

Haitians are indeed hungry. According to the World Food Program, Haiti already has the world's highest daily caloric deficit per person—460 calories a day less than the recommended 2,100.

Driven from the wall, the protesters retreated to the nearby Champ de Mars, which was the scene of numerous skirmishes during the day. Even though the U.N. forces could see people actively redistributing goods from stores in the neighborhood of the palace, they did not move to stop them, probably fearing the rebellion would only grow.

Jean-Jacques Augustin, a photographer for Le Matin, and Leblanc Macaenzy, a camera person for Channel 11 television, were struck by the U.N.'s rubber bullets during the skirmishes. Yves Joseph, a photographer/reporter for Haïti-Progrès, got pellets in his leg and arm.

The protest in Port-au-Prince was not just at the Presidential Palace. Barricades of burning tires and trash were set up all over the city. There was no public transportation and banks, stores, schools and

government offices were all closed. Port-au-Prince didn't function normally for three days. While most of the protesters carried nothing more than clubs, there were reports of some weapons.

Three U.N. "peacekeepers" serving in Haiti were shot the next day in Martissant, a very poor neighborhood of the capital. Another U.N. anti-riot cop was killed April 12 near the cathedral in downtown Port-au-Prince.

The slogans in the food protest were simple: "Down with Préval!" (the president) "End the high cost of living!" and "End the U.N. occupation!" Many demonstrators carried pictures and images of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, deposed in 2004 in a coup inspired and financed by the United States.

Protests were also held throughout Haiti beginning April 7 and 8 in large cities like Cayes, Jacmel, Jeremie and Gonaïves. In Jeremie, the U.N. and local cops broke up the protest with tear gas. In the northern city of Cap-Haïtien, protesters tried to take food sitting in the warehouse of the U.N. World Food Program. Protesters also burned tires in Ouanaminthe, on the border with the Dominican Republic, and hundreds marched peacefully in the western port of St. Marc. There were also protests in smaller towns like Petit-Goâve, Miragoane, Aquin, Cavaillon, Saint-Jean du Sud, Léogâne, Vialet, Anse-à-Veau and Simon.

No organization took credit for these nearly simultaneous demonstrations and protests on a national level, but they showed coordination and consultation.



Desperate crowd gathers in Port-au-Prince.

The Platform of Organization of La Savane did call the large protests in Cayes, but it is not a national organization. Le Devoir, a French-language newspaper in Montreal known for its hostility to Cuba but support for the Quebec bourgeoisie, which has interests in Haiti, quoted Haitian sociologist Laenec Hurbon, who claimed Aristide's Lavalas Movement was behind the protests and redistribution of food.

Haitian government maneuvers

In a sudden move and in the absence of senators of his Lespwa (Hope) Party, the Haitian Senate voted on April 12 to censure Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis, which meant he could no longer continue in that post. After deaths and more than 100 injured in the protests over hunger imposed by the market oligarchs, some politician had to take the fall.

The Haiti Information Project points out: "The United Nations has blamed the recent upheaval in Haiti on rising world food prices while many in the country also point to the international body's support of neoliberal economic policies that have favored the Caribbean nation's small

wealthy elite. Profits of wealthy Haitian families and clans who maintain a virtual monopoly on the importation of staples such as rice and beans have risen almost as dramatically as prices for basic goods."

On April 13 President Préval held a press conference to announce that the three major rice importers had agreed to lower their prices \$3 a sack and that he had found the international funding to provide another \$7 a sack reduction. Even after this price cut goes into effect, however, the wholesale price of 10 pounds of rice in Haiti will be 60 cents more than the current retail price in New York City. But 80 percent of the people in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day.

"The situation is difficult everywhere around the world. Everyone has to make a sacrifice," Préval told a news conference.

"We are not going to lower taxes on food," he added, using the excuse that the government would not have enough money to pay for longer-term projects to create jobs and boost agriculture.

Even the right-wing Radio Metropole had to point out on its Internet site that Préval didn't say when this "price cut," which is set to last only 30 days, will start.

Préval and the Haitian bourgeoisie, as well as the U.S., Canadian and French capitalists who pull their strings, can maneuver all they want. But until the Haitian people see real relief from "la vie chère" (the high cost of living), their anger is going to remain potentially explosive. □

Protests over high food prices go global

By Kathy Durkin

People are rising up in much of the world to vehemently protest rising food prices.

Furious at seeing their children go hungry, and enraged at the inequities of it all, working and poor people all over the globe are militantly protesting. In Mexico, Haiti, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Uzbekistan, the Philippines and Indonesia—as well as in several African nations, including Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia—anger is boiling over at the exorbitant prices of basic foods.

Rice, a staple for nearly half the world's peoples, costs twice what it did at the start of the year. Corn and wheat costs are sky-high.

The World Bank and capitalist governments are worried that growing mass protests against rising food prices will grow into rebellions and threaten the stability of their profit system.

The World Bank has reported that worldwide food prices grew by 83 percent over the last three years. Its president, Robert Zoellick, warned that 33 nations are at risk of social unrest due to rising food prices.

When 10,000 Bangladeshi textile workers marched in Dhaka on April 12 for higher wages to pay for increased food prices, they were attacked by police. Dozens were hurt. These workers, along with the rest of the population, are outraged at the 30 percent hike in the price of rice over the last year in a country one-half of whose 150 million people live on under \$1 a day.

In Pakistan and Thailand, soldiers were dispatched to fields and warehouses to prevent food seizures by the many who are hungry. (Agence France-Presse, April 13)

In countries across the globe where imperialism has caused enormous income

inequality, the majority spend most of their income on food. Nigerians, for example, spend 73 percent of their earnings on food; Indonesians spend half.

Soaring food prices have put millions of people at risk of starvation.

Many factors but one main cause

What has fueled these high costs?

Modern food production relies on petroleum. It is used for fertilizers, farm equipment and transportation.

War is also a factor impacting on food prices. Militaries use a lot of oil, whose price has climbed to \$100 a barrel since the Iraq and Afghanistan wars began.

In Haiti and Egypt, food is on sale, but the prices are out of reach for the masses. In other countries, such as the Philippines, food shortages are partially due to less domestic food cultivation.

Restricted food exports in some countries and lower global food production and inventories increase demand, which also drives prices high. Farmers who grew rice and other food staples are switching to more profitable cash crops. Another trend is to sell off agricultural land for other money-making uses.

Global warming and climate change, as a result of imperialist plunder of the earth's resources, have caused damage to food cultivation.

Then there's the enormous impact of corporate farms converting cropland from food production to growing raw materials, mostly corn, for ethanol production. These biofuels are in great demand and highly profitable, but they take arable land away from food production and drive up food prices. It means there's less corn to feed people.

Cultivation zeroes in where the profits are greatest, a given in capitalist economies even though food is vitally needed

worldwide. Agribusiness is even cutting down trees in rainforests, causing more deforestation, in the rush to make money.

As regards the environment, Eric Holt-Gimenez, director of Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, explains that biofuel production, instead of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adds even more "from deforestation, burning, peat drainage, cultivation and soil-carbon losses." (International Herald Tribune, July 10, 2007)

Native food production is even further harmed by globalized biofuel farming as Indigenous farmers are pushed out, along with their crops.

Biofuel cultivation is big business. Highly industrialized countries are demanding ethanol. The European Union is exempting biofuel from some gas taxes.

Holt-Gimenez said of the concentration of wealth and market power in the biofuels industry, "Venture capital investment in biofuels grew by 800 percent in the last three years."

Agribusiness giants Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill control most of the U.S. ethanol production and are its biggest profiteers. The U.S. government gives them billions of dollars in agricultural subsidies, tax credits and much more.

Lester R. Brown, president of Earth Policy Institute, says, "One of the consequences of this enormous shift of grain [to biofuels] is that hunger and malnutrition, which were supposed to be declining during this period, haven't." Predictions are there will be 1.2 billion hungry people by 2025. (Associated Press, Jan. 29)

Right now, nearly one billion people are hungry worldwide. Every day 24,000 children die from hunger and malnutrition.

The United Nations says it would cost \$195 billion annually to end world hunger and related diseases. This is less than

what the U.S. spends each year on the Iraq war.

But there is no long-term solution for world hunger as long as the almighty dollar reigns over humanity's needs. The capitalist market and its drive for profits will always take precedence, no matter what is needed.

Productive forces worldwide can potentially produce food for all. But it takes a planned socialist economy based on human need rather than the profit motive.

The goal of capitalist production is to sell food for profit, even when people are starving. Food is a commodity like everything else. High prices and large warehouses of grain can exist side by side with starvation when people are too poor to buy food.

This is one more reason why socialism is superior to capitalism, especially for the masses of people worldwide. Socialist centralized planning of production for what people need and equitable global distribution of food to all who need it are vital to solve this growing catastrophe. □

Ireland, national liberation & socialism

The Detroit branch of Workers World Party will hold a forum to "address the Irish and other national liberation movements in the last century of world struggles for socialism, with particular emphasis on the shared history of solidarity between the Black and Green struggles." Ed Childs from Boston and Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire, are featured speakers. Time: Saturday, April 19, 5 p.m. Place: 5920 Second Ave., Detroit. For more information: 313-831-0750 or detroit@workers.org.



Remember '48

In 1848—that’s 160 years ago now—the workers of Paris and other European cities rose up against their hunger and oppression and took to the barricades.

The 1848 revolutions inspired the “Communist Manifesto” by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. These two young Germans participated in the street struggles, but they also wrote in stirring words about why political reform wasn’t enough to solve the terrible gap between rich and poor, parasite and producer. They organized workers and laid out a program for social revolution, for the working masses to take over the reins of society and break free not only of the ruling classes—both the old feudal aristocracy and the new moneyed elite—but of all the intermediate strata who worked for those rulers in one capacity or another.

They saw that capitalism, where virtually nothing is untouched by the market and the drive for profit—not water, not love, not even the air we breathe—could only be replaced by demolishing private ownership of the means of production and harnessing the productive forces under workers’ organization and control for the social good.

In the long period since, the capitalist system, then in its youth, has lengthened its life span by transitioning into imperialism and super-exploiting the resources and peoples brought under its domination. It has also harnessed science and technology to utterly transform the world—but always along paths that enhanced the rulers’ own wealth and their power over society.

What would Marx and Engels think if they could see what life is like today? Would they be amazed that, so many years after the workers of Paris tried to make a reality of the slogan “Liberty, equality, brotherhood,” whole continents are still enchained to the global banks and corporations while the rich-poor gap has become a chasm wider than the Grand Canyon?

Marx in particular understood the laws of contradiction. He knew that the further the rubber band is stretched, the greater the tension under the earth’s tectonic plates, the more energy will be released when forces turn into their opposites and things spring back.

In truth, capitalism has not only grown enormously but it has become even more monstrously untenable in this electronic space age. It is a disaster waiting to happen—in many more ways than one.

The premier capitalist country is the

United States. It became an empire not just via colonial conquest but through the export of vast amounts of capital extracted from the laboring masses at home—Black, white, Native and Asian. And it is the United States that is now threatening to bring down the whole world capitalist edifice with its unpayable public and private debts in the trillions of dollars, its stupendous disparity between rising (still!) CEO salaries and workers’ sinking earnings, its plunging dollar, its endless wars and hyperinflated military budget.

And let’s not forget the impact that U.S. capitalism in particular has had on degrading the life systems of the planet.

Marxism then and now is not all doom and gloom, however. Quite the contrary. What Marxism shows is that there is a way out, that capitalism “creates its own gravediggers.” That quote might have sounded very harsh when it seemed that the boons of the profit system would go on forever. But today there are more and more people who want to pick up a shovel and start digging.

Indeed, the class that Marx was talking about—the working class—is today also much different than in 1848. First of all, the workers, the people who live by selling their ability to labor, today make up the vast majority in all industrialized countries. In Marx’s day, wage workers were a small minority.

The working class today has the skills to run everything. Workers don’t need bosses or foremen to tell them what to do. As every worker knows, it’s the bosses who know little about production and make a mess of it when they decide to interfere.

The working class today is very international, linked together by the threads of production that are now global. Solidarity of workers across national borders will be key to changing the world. And in countries like the U.S., and increasingly in Europe, the working class at home is becoming more multinational.

Most women now are wage earners, unlike in Marx’s day. They participate directly in the class struggle and, in the U.S., are the main factor in growing the unions again.

The horrendous conditions now falling over the heads of workers in the U.S. and the rest of the capitalist world cannot be tolerated. Hunger amidst oceans of gourmet food? Homelessness amid a condo glut? No money for health care or education when trillions are spent on war?

Let’s get digging. □

NATO expansion, part 2

Washington tries to scrounge up troops

By Sara Flounders

Correction: Last week, in the first of two articles on the NATO summit, the final word was dropped due to a technical glitch. The last sentence should have read: “Not one more step in the arms race.” Part one covered the mass opposition in Europe, East and West, to the expansion of NATO and the U.S. plan to station ballistic missiles in Poland.

On the eve of the NATO summit, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said an additional 7,500 soldiers and 3,000 military trainers needed to be sent immediately to Afghanistan.

Some 59,000 troops from 39 countries are occupying Afghanistan at the present, including 19,000 U.S. soldiers. Of this number, 47,500 are under NATO command.

As their mission has faltered and Afghan resistance has grown, internal rifts in the NATO alliance are being aired publicly. Disagreements over burden sharing, coordination and strategic direction are plaguing the alliance. Canada threatened to pull out of Afghanistan if other countries did not send substantially more troops. Germany has refused to expand its existing force of 3,200.

The Bush administration had no realistic hope of getting the NATO allies to send large additional numbers. Yet the Pentagon is so over-stretched in Iraq that it cannot provide them itself. Bush’s message—“We expect our NATO allies to shoulder the burden necessary to succeed”—was hardly popular or winning.

Under pressure during the meetings, President Nicholas Sarkozy grandly said France would deploy an additional 1,000 troops. The French Parliament immediately cut this number down to 700. Poland agreed to send another 400 troops. Romania, Spain and Britain pledged to boost their numbers by a few hundred each. But the immediate goal of 10,000 additional troops was not even close.

Shrinking coalition in Iraq

Former prime ministers Tony Blair of Britain, John Howard of Australia,

Jose Maria Aznar of Spain and Silvio Berlusconi of Italy lost their elected positions due to the enormously unpopular commitment of troops to Iraq and their support of the war. It is now considered political suicide in Western Europe for politicians to increase their troop commitment in Afghanistan or Iraq

The small, dependent new members of NATO being pressed on every side to

send ever more soldiers as can-

non fodder to Afghanistan, Iraq and other missions, get confused

on the command structures. Romanian President Traian Basescu referred to his country’s troops in Iraq as NATO forces at a press conference on April 8. He was publicly corrected with the explanation that NATO does not have a mission in Iraq, where Romanian troops are part of the “International Coalition.” The mission is the same—securing an imperialist occupation. Only the name is different.

As other imperialist forces—such as Britain, Spain, Italy, Australia and Japan—withdraw from Iraq, the shrinking “International Coalition” is carried by ground forces from poorer countries like El Salvador and Tonga, as well as many once part of or allied to the Soviet Union, like Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania, Kazakhstan and Mongolia.

The number of non-U.S. troops in Iraq is down from 23,000 in 2003 to less than 10,000 today, and shrinking.

The costs incurred by 20 of the poorer countries are paid by U.S. taxpayers. The cost of more than 160,000 U.S. troops and 100,000 private contractors in Iraq is also paid by the taxes and budget cuts plaguing poor and working people in the U.S.

Seeds of NATO’s defeat

NATO is first and foremost a military alliance. Therein lie the seeds of its defeat. Every battle in both Iraq and Afghanistan confirms that while the U.S./NATO forces may prevail over local resistance forces by the use of overwhelming military power and indiscriminate bombing, they succeed only in increasing the size of the resistance and recruiting more insurgents. Sending more troops only exacerbates the problem.

U.S. imperialism is facing an unsolvable contradiction. The political movement must be on the alert. These contradictions can make the billionaire rulers more desperate and more dangerous. As their world economic position slips, along with the almighty U.S. dollar, they are increasingly attracted to military solutions. But maintaining the weapons, bases and troops sucks up an ever-greater share of resources. Militarism is both a life-sustaining corporate subsidy and an endless drain on the economy as a whole.

With each passing day the cost of endless wars of occupation is becoming clearer and less acceptable to millions of poor and working people in the U.S. and across Europe. Increasing economic hardships, budget cuts and military casualties are undermining this grand military alliance. NATO is crumbling from below, even as it expands numerically and geographically. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Planes de EEUU para la OTAN chocan contra la pared

Continúa de página 12

la oportunidad de hacerlo, votaría en contra de la unión a la OTAN. Este sentimiento popular está reflejado en los movimientos masivos que están creciendo en las calles.

En la víspera de la reunión cumbre en Bucarest, un bloque de socialistas y comunistas en Ucrania llamó a manifestaciones masivas. Su volante decía “Hoy en día el/la estadounidense promedio quien aporta una parte significativa del presupuesto de su familia para las operaciones militares en Irak, ya no quiere pagar por esta operación y no quiere que sus hombres mueran allá. ¿Quieren eso los ucranianos?

¡OTAN — No!”

Una manifestación en Kiev, la capital de Ucrania, se dirigió a la Embajada Estadounidense y bloqueó el centro de la

ciudad por horas. Algunos se quedaron por la noche y levantaron carpas para quedarse allí más tiempo.

Manifestaciones masivas también tuvieron lugar en las ciudades ucranianas de Karkov, Dniepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Luhansk, Odesa, Zaporizhzhya, y Sebastopol.

Tres días más tarde, cuando la OTAN fracasó en lograr una decisión sobre la unión de Ucrania y Georgia al programa de PAM, decenas de miles por toda Ucrania celebraron la victoria en las calles.

En Bucarest, donde se esperaban manifestantes de toda Rumania y de Europa para protestar la reunión de la OTAN, 30.000 policías, militares, francotiradores, y policía clandestina ocuparon el centro de la ciudad.

Hicieron detenciones masivas en el centro de convergencia anti-OTAN el cual había sido legalmente alquilado. Todos los permisos de protesta fueron negados, haciendo que todas manifestaciones contra la OTAN fueran ilegales. Se estimuló a l@s residentes a dejar la ciudad. Las escuelas y los lugares de trabajo fueron cerrados por la duración de la reunión cumbre. El jefe de la policía de Bucarest advirtió públicamente que las protestas no serían toleradas. L@s activistas que intentaron entrar en Rumania de otros países de la Unión Europea les fue negada la entrada sin dar ningún motivo.

Cientos de personas participaron en una manifestación en el norte de Polonia el 29 de marzo contra los planes estadounidenses de construir una base de defensa de misiles en la región. L@s manifestantes llevaban banderas que decían: “No queremos ser su escudo de misiles” y “Ni un paso más en la carrera armamentista”. □

A temporary victory

Colombian unions campaign against FTA

By Berta Joubert-Ceci
Philadelphia

The Bush administration sent the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) it had negotiated with Colombia to Congress in early April for a fast-track vote, which would allow a 90-day period to vote on it with no possibility of making any amendment.

However, Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the House of Representatives is being credited in the media with refusing to put the bill on the floor, thus putting a freeze on it.

The postponement of a vote is just a temporary victory for Colombian workers. It is due primarily to the hard work of many Colombian trade unionists who have risked their lives visiting the United States to expose the crimes and violence against union leaders in their country. They have also hosted delegations of U.S. union leaders, other social activists and members of the U.S. Congress to show them firsthand the conditions in Colombia.

Colombian unionist visits Philadelphia

One of those union leaders is Edgar Páez, international representative of Sinaltrainal, the union of food industry workers in Colombia. The union represents workers in Coca-Cola, Chiquita and other U.S. transnational corporations that have employed deadly paramilitaries against the workers in order to destroy their union and garner more profits.

Páez visited Philadelphia for two days in a speaking tour that is also taking him to Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Boston, New York and Washington.

In Philadelphia he was hosted by AFSCME DC 47, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, SEIU BJ 32 and the International Action Center in an evening of solidarity. Cathy Scott, DC 47 president, opened the program at the union hall.

The consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement were discussed by Luis Tlaseca of the Kaolin Workers Union. It represents mostly Mexican workers who toil in the mushroom farms of near-by Kennett Square, where nearly half the commercial mushrooms in the U.S. are grown. Tlaseca explained how NAFTA has enriched U.S. transnational corporations at the expense of the pauperization of small Mexican farmers, who then must emigrate to the U.S. in order to survive.

AFSCME Local 1723 President Paul Dannenfelser, representing workers at Temple University, spoke about his union's struggle for a fair contract. At a time when tuition has risen along with the university's profits, benefits for the unionized workers have declined, their health-care costs have increased and they have been working without a contract since last October.

Slaughter of Colombian trade unionists

Páez made it clear he was going to talk not only about the terrible conditions for Colombian workers but also about the initiatives they are developing for a better Colombia.

He described demonstrations held in Colombia and worldwide on March 6 against the crimes of the Colombian state and on behalf of its victims. Twenty-eight demonstrations were held inside Colombia and 70 in 60 other countries, including the U.S.

Four thousand union leaders have been killed in Colombia over the last 20 years—13 this year alone. Since Páez's talk, four more have been killed. Some 500 union leaders have had to go into exile after threats from paramilitaries.

Four million people, mostly peasants, have been displaced within Colombia. Paramilitaries have stolen 12.5 million acres of land and the new Law of Justice and Peace has made this theft legal.

Afro-Colombian communities have also been displaced, mostly so transnational corporations can plant African oil palms on their land.

Students and women's organizations have also been severely repressed.

Indigenous peoples are on the verge of being annihilated for the same reason: displacement in order to use their land for the benefit of transnational corporations.

The criminals remain immune because of the inaction of the Colombian government. That is why, Páez explained, the unions have been going to other bodies of justice like courts in the U.S. and the Permanent People's Tribunal. Suits against Drummond, Coca-Cola, Chiquita and Occidental Petroleum are presently before U.S. courts.

Chiquita, for example, gave \$1.7 million as well as 3,000 AK-47 rifles and 5 million bullets to the paramilitaries, who have massacred thousands of workers in Colombia. Páez reminded the audience that all the Colombian bananas we eat in the U.S. are from Chiquita.

He invited everyone to take part in sessions of the Permanent People's Tribunal in Colombia July 21-23, when it will conduct its concluding session on the role of the transnational corporations.

The following day Páez went to the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO convention, being held that week in Philadelphia. Thanks to the intervention of Kathy Black, president of Philadelphia CLUW, Páez was introduced during a session and received a standing ovation. He was preceded by Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, who stated he was opposed to the FTA with Colombia because of the vio-



WW PHOTO BERTA JOUBERT-CECI

Edgar Páez, international representative of Sinaltrainal, the union of food industry workers in Colombia.

lence against union leaders.

Larry Cohen, president of the Communication Workers of America, spoke about his experiences in Colombia and his admiration and respect for Colombian workers. Last February, Cohen went with an AFL-CIO delegation to Bogotá to assess the conditions for workers there, and met Páez.

Colombian FTA and Clinton connection

Hillary Clinton, who had addressed the convention a day earlier, did not raise Colombia. Her chief campaign strategist, Mark J. Penn, had met privately the week before with Colombian Ambassador Carolina Barco to further the FTA. It turns out that Penn's firm, Burson-Marsteller, had been hired by the Colombian government for \$300,000 a year to push the FTA in Congress.

Another Clinton-related firm is also involved: the Glover Park Group, which was established by former aides in the Clinton administration. However, in campaign speeches, Clinton has stated that she disagrees with Bill Clinton and opposes the FTA. Many unionists see this as a political ploy.

Despite the congressional vote, the Colombia FTA is not really dead, as the Miami-based Latin Business Chronicle

Filipino women's leader tours U.S.

Special to Workers World San Francisco

Emmi De Jesus, secretary-general of the women's group Gabriela in the Philippines, arrived in the U.S. April 6 for a national speaking tour of four cities. She is traveling from coast to coast, speaking in Los Angeles, Seattle, New York and San Francisco to support the recent founding of Gabriela-USA.

In the different venues, De Jesus is speaking on the burning issues at the forefront of women's lives in the Philippines, the gross human rights violations situation, violence against women, abject poverty, and gender and sexual discrimination.

De Jesus was a founding member of Gabriela Philippines in 1984. Today, 24 years later, the group is the largest national alliance of women's organizations in the Philippines. As a Filipino women's campaign center, Gabriela integrates their struggles into the Philippine resistance against first-world domination and for genuine sovereignty and democracy. Gabriela is a model for women's movements all over the globe, mobilizing broad communities for state accountability to repression and violence in the Philippines.

"The current economic crisis in the Philippines that is fueled by global trade policies is forcing Filipino women to leave their homeland at alarming rates. For their families' survival, educated women



Emmi De Jesus, a leader of Gabriela.

are becoming domestic workers, entertainers, and even face modern-day slavery as trafficked persons," declared Joanne Alcantara, the National Coordinator of Gabriela-USA. "Because of this, it is crucial that we continue building an organized movement for true economic justice in the U.S., from the voices of Filipino women."

The speaking tour highlights the linkages between Filipino women's struggles in the U.S. and the Philippines and, simultaneously, celebrates the rich spirit of resilience they share across oceans and continents.

De Jesus spoke at UC Irvine, where a community gathering was hosted by Strong Womyn of Irvine and The Womyn's Collective of Los Angeles.

De Jesus was hosted by Pinay sa Seattle on April 12. She keynoted at an anti-trafficking conference at the University of Washington called Asian Pacific Islander Community Responses to Human Trafficking: Working Together to Create Change.

This conference was co-sponsored by Pinay sa Seattle, University of Washington Women's Center, Marc Lindenberg Center, UW Center for Global Studies, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, Asian Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center, and the Washington Advisory Committee on Trafficking.

Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment (FiRE) will be welcoming De Jesus in New York with a community reception

pointed out on April 14. It wrote: "Despite the indefinite postponement of a congressional vote, the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement may be approved as early as this year, leading experts say. 'With a measure of good will among the House leadership, the Bush White House, and the Colombian government, I think there is still time to find sufficient common ground to approve the FTA by year's end,' says Peter Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue."

President George W. Bush is still pushing the FTA with Colombia in the interest of "national security," putting intense pressure on Congress since it refused to vote. The White House issued a press release praising the "advances" of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, Washington's closest ally in Latin America at a time when other countries in the region are moving away from U.S. control.

Then there are Nancy Pelosi's own words. She was for postponing the vote because "If the FTA goes to a vote now, it will lose, and then what message will we be sending?" She leaves open an FTA based on "good-faith negotiations between Democrats and the White House" and met with the Colombian ambassador after the postponement.

Every week, more of Uribe's closest allies in the Colombian Congress are being charged and imprisoned for close ties with the paramilitaries. So far, 30 are in jail and 21 more are being investigated. An April 12 article in the weekly magazine Semana.com entitled "The Empty Seats" described how the Colombian Congress can't function because of the absence of the imprisoned legislators and the nervousness of others awaiting indictment.

This is the government that Bush defends as "democratic"—51 legislators accused of crimes against humanity. His kind of people. □

at the Bayanihan Center on April 18 at 7 p.m., at 40-21 69th Street in the heart of the Filipino community in Woodside. De Jesus is also the keynote speaker during the annual Filipina showcase Diwang Pinay (Spirit of the Filipina) on Saturday, April 19 at 7 p.m. at Judson Memorial Church at 55 Washington Square South in Manhattan. The Women's Fightback Network-New York Chapter will be holding a reception for De Jesus at the Solidarity Center at 55 W. 17th St. from 3 p.m. until 5 p.m. on April 19.

In San Francisco, Babae will host De Jesus as a featured speaker at the 6th Annual Diwang Pinay, co-sponsored by the League of Filipino Students, SFSU. The showcase is set for Friday, April 25 at 7 p.m. at the Lincoln Community Center located at 901 Brunswick St., Daly City, and will conclude De Jesus's U.S. tour.

"Emmi De Jesus' historic and momentous tour will only intensify the growing Filipino women's movement in the U.S.," Alcantara states. "She will receive a warm welcome at her every stop in the U.S. Wherever Filipino women are, we will be proud to carry the flag of Gabriela as we expand our international women's movement."

Pinay sa Seattle, Babae (San Francisco) and FiRE, a mass-based women's organization serving New York City and its surrounding areas, are part of Gabriela-USA, the first overseas chapter of Gabriela. Go to www.firenyc.org or call 641-715-3900 for more information about the tour.

Oposición aumenta en Europa

Planes de EEUU para la OTAN chocan contra la pared

Por Sara Flounders

La OTAN sostuvo una reunión de tres días en Bucarest, Rumania del 2 al 4 de abril a la cual asistió George W. Bush y otros jefes de estado. Fue una reunión tormentosa. Esta alianza de potencias militares imperialistas dominada por mucho tiempo por Estados Unidos, se vio dividida por varias propuestas presentadas por Washington.

Una de las propuestas era la expansión de la OTAN hacia el este para incluir a Ucrania y Georgia, las cuales formaban parte de la Unión Soviética y están en la frontera de Rusia. Otra era la de instalar un sistema estadounidense de misiles balísticos en la República Checa y en Polonia, el corazón de Europa. Otra era el reconocimiento por Washington de la independencia de la provincia serbia de Kosovo.

Sin embargo el problema más inmediato para Bush fue la resistencia a su petición de que la OTAN enviara miles de soldados más a Afganistán. El problema de encontrar más jóvenes para ser carne de cañón expuso la evidente debilidad de esta rápida alianza militar.

Estados Unidos está tan atrancado y tan sobre extendido en Irak que ahora está forzando a otros miembros de la OTAN para que llenen el vacío que la situación del deterioro del Pentágono en Afganistán ha creado. Sin embargo, hay una gran oposición en Europa al aumento de gastos militares y en especial a salvar a Estados Unidos enviando tropas a Irak y Afganistán.

Sondeo tras sondeo tanto en Europa oriental como en Europa occidental, la gran mayoría de la gente se ha opuesto a un involucramiento militar más profundo. Los políticos saben que enviar más tropas a Irak o Afganistán es un suicidio político.

El imperialismo estadounidense tiene grandes y ominosos planes de rodear a Rusia y a China con bases de EEUU/OTAN. Los planes se ven bien en papel y en los juegos de guerra. Pero desplazar tropas es cada vez más difícil.

Las manifestaciones en contra de las reuniones de la OTAN y sus ejercicios militares muestran una oposición más profunda que se fermenta en las masas populares.

Además, Rusia ha advertido que la expansión hacia el este de la OTAN y el establecimiento de misiles estadounidenses en la República Checa y en Polonia son una grave amenaza a su seguridad y podría llevar a una inestabilidad en toda Europa y hasta a una guerra.

Tanto la fuerte oposición de Rusia como la creciente resistencia en los respectivos países han llevado a grandes desacuerdos entre los imperialistas europeos. En la reunión de Bucarest, Alemania, Francia, España, Italia, Bélgica, Los Países Bajos y Luxemburgo, fuerte y abiertamente se opusieron a las exigencias de Bush de incluir a Ucrania y a Georgia en la OTAN.

Las clases dominantes de estos países son también ladrones imperialistas. Pero temen que estos agresivos avances militares de los Estados Unidos puedan estar creando oposición en las bases populares. Sus continuas ganancias están basadas en la estabilidad capitalista.

Los débiles y dependientes regímenes capitalistas de Europa Oriental y los Balcanes, recientemente aceptados en la OTAN, votaron con los Estados Unidos.

La clase capitalista de EEUU vota por expansión de OTAN

Bush declaró en Bucarest que “la OTAN ya no es solo una alianza estática enfocada en la defensa de Europa. ...esta es ahora una alianza expedicionaria que envía sus tropas a todo el mundo. ...” (New York Times, 5 de abril) El presidente estadounidense no habló solo a nombre de su pequeño círculo. Llevaba consigo una resolución aceptada unánimemente por la Cámara de Representante en apoyo a sus demandas de incluir a Georgia y a Ucrania en la OTAN.

En el Congreso y entre los candidatos presidenciales y otros políticos de ambos partidos, no hubo debate u oposición a estas peligrosas propuestas sobre la dirección futura de la OTAN.

Apenas se reportó en la prensa capitalista de los Estados Unidos cómo las demandas de Bush se convirtieron en fuente de descontento durante la cena de la OTAN que regularmente es muy sedada. La discusión política duró dos horas más de lo programado. Finalmente Laura Bush y las esposas de otros líderes se retiraron de la reunión cuando los intercambios exaltados continuaron.

Mientras que la prensa de Estados Unidos se enfocaba en el Dalai Lama y las acciones de China en el Tibet, no hubo cobertura alguna del cierre total de toda la población de Bucarest por 30.000 agentes de la policía y de la prohibición de toda reunión política o protestas.

La unanimidad de la clase dominante acerca de la expansión de la OTAN está reflejada hasta en el movimiento progresista en los EEUU. Mientras que hay una oposición abrumadora a la ocupación estadounidense de Irak, hay poca discusión sobre el costo a largo plazo y los peligros de la expansión de la OTAN.

Washington tenía grandes esperanzas antes de la cumbre de la OTAN. La noche anterior al encuentro, el General Ray Henault, presidente del Comité Militar de la OTAN, dijo los siguientes puntos en forma jactanciosa: “Hace menos de 20 años, la OTAN consistía de 16 miembros, no contaba a ninguno como socio, y no conducía operaciones o ejercicios fuera de las fronteras de los estados miembros. ... Hoy, la OTAN cuenta con 26 miembros y 38 otros países en cuatro arreglos de asociación. ...

“En pocos años, la OTAN ha conducido ocho operaciones en cuatro continentes. La OTAN se ha expandido cinco veces desde su creación, y su crecimiento parece inevitable.

... Y no parece que ese ritmo de actividad vaya a disminuir pronto.”

El Gen. Henault predijo que la “Cumbre de Bucarest tendrá suma importancia para la orientación futura de la alianza y de sus socios, resultando en decisiones políticas claves sobre el crecimiento y mejoras en nuestra capacidad militar, y en cómo conducimos nuestras operaciones”.

Pero la reunión no fue así. No fue posible disfrazar las diferencias en las cenas de estado o en la conferencia de prensa final.

Los líderes de la OTAN decidieron dejar la cuestión contenciosa de Ucrania y Georgia para una reunión de cancilleres que tendrá lugar en diciembre de 2008.

No hubo acuerdo sobre el reconocimiento diplomático de Kosovo. Cada político intentó evitar compromisos firmes para el envío de más tropas a Afganistán.

Rápido crecimiento de OTAN

La OTAN como alianza militar dominada por los EEUU era hasta el colapso de la Unión Soviética, un bloque de países prósperos, industrializados, e imperialistas que se habían enriquecido por décadas de pillaje colonial.

Era primordialmente un bloque imperialista dedicado a defender los mercados capitalistas contra la propagación de revoluciones socialistas en Europa a través del poder militar, chantaje nuclear, sabotaje económico, de espionaje y de terror.

Ahora la OTAN ha crecido un tamaño cuatro veces el original y se ha extendido mucho más allá que el área cubierta en el Atlántico del Norte. Todos los nuevos miembros y los “socios” de este bloque militar son países de Europa del este y de la ex Unión Soviética que se han convertido en mini estados capturados y colonizados económicamente por el imperialismo europeo y estadounidense.

Hasta el 1990 tuvieron economías mucho más integradas y planificadas basadas en la propiedad pública de los medios de producción. Las necesidades básicas desde alimentación y vivienda, hasta el cuidado de la salud y la educación estaban garantizadas y subvencionadas por el estado.

La membresía en esta alianza militar imperialista no se basa en la igualdad o en la democracia. Está basada en una élite pequeña y privilegiada que se ha beneficiado enormemente de la privatización forzada de industrias que anteriormente eran propiedad del pueblo. Estas élites están ansiosas por estabilizar su nuevo capitalismo atando a sus países a los mercados del Oeste. La pertenencia a la OTAN y a la Unión Europea está considerada por este grupo pequeño como una barrera de seguridad contra su propia clase trabajadora.

El proceso de absorción de estas economías ha sido despiadado. Para unirse a la OTAN, los gobiernos tienen un máximo de 10 años para convertir sus economías anteriormente socialistas a un “alineamiento” a las economías de los EEUU y Europa. La OTAN llama a este proceso el “Plan de Acción para Membresía” (PAM). Es el mapa de ruta que indica a los regímenes las condiciones económicas y militares severas que tendrán que imponer para ser considerados para la membresía en la OTAN.

Aquellos aceptados en el PAM tendrán que entregar la totalidad de su país a los planificadores de los EEUU para asegurarse que van a hacer los cambios necesarios para integrarse a los mercados capitalistas del Oeste. Los países tienen que comprometerse a una “cooperación” extensa con los EEUU en los campos de la economía, la política, y la seguridad.

Tendrán que desarrollar todas las facilidades militares que se les requiera, contribuir tropas para que participen en acciones militares de la OTAN, y asegurar

que sus fuerzas militares estén obedeciendo a la estructura de mando de la OTAN. La soberanía política y económica se pierde. Toda planificación a largo plazo tiene que ser coordinada con los EEUU. Pero lo más oneroso es que tienen que incrementar vastamente sus gastos para la defensa y la policía e integrar plenamente su sistema de inteligencia con la de la OTAN. Tienen que aceptar nuevos préstamos enormes y comprometerse a comprar equipo militar de los EEUU que se integra con los de la OTAN.

A estos países les habían hecho promesas enormes sobre la prosperidad que les esperaba a largo plazo si se sometían totalmente. Pero ahora ellos son los primeros en sentir el impacto de la crisis económica que está diseminándose por todos los mercados capitalistas.

Manifestaciones y la oposición masiva

Por toda Europa se puede ver en manifestaciones y en encuestas la furiosa oposición a la expansión de la OTAN, al despliegue de misiles balísticos estadounidenses, y al envío de las fuerzas de la OTAN a Afganistán.

En la República Checa y en Polonia, las encuestas muestran que hasta un 70 por ciento se opone a las instalaciones de misiles en sus países. Asambleas masivas, manifestaciones y campañas de peticiones están reclamando que la cuestión sea decidida por un referéndum nacional. Los gobiernos débiles de Praga y Varsovia que están respaldados por los Estados Unidos estaban esperando la bendición de la OTAN para el proyecto de las bases de misiles.

Una investigación dirigida por sociólogos del Centro Levada mostró que tres cuartas partes de la población de Rusia están en contra de la admisión de Ucrania y Georgia a la OTAN. Una encuesta de Harris reportó el 28 de marzo que europeos del este y del oeste se oponen al despliegue de misiles estadounidenses en la República Checa y en Polonia, viéndolo como el comienzo de más misiles estadounidenses en Europa. Los que fueron incluidos en la encuesta vieron como improbable la idea de que Irán sea una amenaza nuclear, lo cual Washington da como una justificación para el despliegue. Por toda Europa el pueblo piensa que es Rusia la que podría ser blanco de una acción militar.

En Alemania más del 70 por ciento de las personas que participaron en la encuesta opinaron en contra del despliegue. En España la oposición fue de un 61 por ciento y en Francia de 58 por ciento. El apoyo para los misiles estadounidenses fue muy bajo – de 11 a 20 por ciento.

Una encuesta alemana del Fondo Marshal encontró que solamente un 30 por ciento de europeos apoya el comprometer tropas para operaciones de combate en Afganistán.

En Ucrania, un estudio publicado en febrero mostró que el 70 por ciento se oponía a que su país se uniera a la OTAN; solamente el 11 por ciento realmente apoyó la membresía de Ucrania a la OTAN.

Otra encuesta confirmó que el 70 por ciento de la población de Montenegro, dada

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